M'KEITHEN CONFIRMS REPORT OF SLAY PLOT

GOV. JOHN J. M'KEITHEN
Assassination plan revealed.

Threats Said Connected to Labor Probe

By BILL NEIKIRK

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Gov. John McKeithen confirmed Tuesday that he has received reports of a plot to assassinate him. One of the reports put a $5,000 price on the governor's head.

The reports came in connection with the state's probe of racketeering by the Labor-Management Commission of inquiry. Commission chief counsel Tom McFerrin said a report came to him that someone "was searching for a contract on the governor's life."

McFerrin said the information placed the $5,000 price on the "contract."

State Police Supt. Thomas Burbank said two such threats were received by the FBI in New Orleans.

OTHER THREATS

"There have been two other threats other than the two reported by the FBI, and surveillance of persons is being conducted at this time," Burbank said.

He declined to give any other information, except to add: "Other information in this matter could be forthcoming in a matter of three or four days."

McKeithen held a hastily called news conference, confirmed the reports, but referred all other matters to Burbank.

The reports came as the state's labor-management probe began to bear fruit. In recent weeks, the state agency has filed a number of charges against labor figures as a result of the year-long probe.

'AGAINST WALL'

"We're about to back those people against the wall," McKeithen said.

Officials said the reports of a death plot came in about three weeks ago.

One report received by authorities was that McKeithen was to have been killed by an ex-convict of the state penitentiary at Angola while he was visiting Mobile, Ala.

There were no incidents during McKeithen's trip to Mobile.

The FBI confirmed it has passed on information of an

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assassination plot to state authorities.

'ONLY COMMENT'

"The only comment we can make is that whenever we receive information concerning a threat, it is immediately given without evaluation to local authorities," a FBI spokesman said.

"In this case, the information was sent immediately to state police, we did not make any evaluation of it. We follow this procedure in all similar type matters."

McKeithen testified before a Senate committee, which questioned the high salaries paid to the labor-managemen commission's investigators.

The governor promised "se sational developments in a sho time" by the investigatie agency.

"We are trying to rid ourselves of extortonand violence in the labor-management area," McKeithen told the senators. "We hope in a very short time to bring this thing to a head."

'NITTY GRITTY'

He did not explain what the developments would be but ruled out disclosures at public hearings. "We're down to the nitty gritty," he said.

Asst. Atty. Gen. Tom McFerrin, chief counsel for the labor-management commission, confirmed that an imformant told of a threat involving a "contract to murder" the governor.

What concerned state authorities was that the reports came in from independent sources, officials said.

McFerrin said that he took the report of the contract "straight to the state police. We went no further with it."

CALLS PROBE

State police are also investigating a number of anonymous telephone calls received at the governor's mansion.

McKeithen came in for criticism recently because of his intervention in helping to parole

Billy Simpson, who won his parole because of an alleged plot to murder him at Angola.

Simpson has become one of the commission's chief informants in the labor-management investigation. Authorities said he has given valuable information on racketeering in the labor-management field in Baton Rouge.

Under sentence for burglary, he was released from the prison within an hour by the commission after the governor prevailed on the parole board.

PLAYED DOWN

The governor generally played down the reports at his news conference. "I didn't want to make any sensationalism out of it," he said, adding that the labor-management commission doesn't need sympathy in the Legislature.

He said he is taking no more precautions than usual, noting that a figure in public life can never be totally shielded from danger.

"Two times zero is zero and that's about the security we have," he said.

The news conference was called at the request of several newsmen seeking the governor's comment.

In response to a question, McKeithen said he is opposed to any gun control law that would call for "turning in of guns."

As for a gun registration law, he said, "I don't see where it's going to be helpful."

He said the criminal element would obtain guns no matter what the laws were.